



Human Rights Committee

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Sanctuary Cities and Immigration Rights Legislation

By: Human Rights Committee

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Position Statement:

The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council supports the reinstatement of Sanctuary Cities in Iowa and the inclusion of Immigrant Communities in Covid-19 Relief and Human Rights Legislation.

Rationale

In 2018 Governor Kim Reynolds signed Senate File 481 that officially banned sanctuary cities in the state of Iowa. The most agreed-upon understanding of a sanctuary city “Is a city or county that has limited the extent to which it will volunteer resources in support of federal immigration enforcement.” [4] This means restricting information given out to law enforcement at the point of the arrest of an immigrant for a non-immigration law, (e.g. speeding or public indecency laws).

This has created conflict within immigrant communities and with local law enforcement. Having non-sanctuary cities often incites violence against immigrant communities, they understand that they cannot go to law enforcement because they could have everything they have worked for taken away from them. This could be legal action such as deportation or federal immigration arrest, both of which led to a separation of Iowa families. With restrictions on how immigrants are able to interact with law enforcement, we could risk slowing or halting investigations into criminal cases. Potentially harming the work of the brave men and women who protect our cities and communities.

Law enforcement in sanctuary cities understands that immigrants can be the victims of crime. According to Chief Brian Manley with the Austin Police Department, "Criminals understand that and they will feel emboldened to commit crimes against the immigrant community without fear of being held accountable because they know they (immigrants) won't call the police,"[1] Manley continues, "It creates a haven for crime". With eyes turned onto how to benefit the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve, our recommended course of action is the reinstatement of sanctuary cities.

Having a state without sanctuary cities also harms our economy and keeps new immigrants from settling in Iowa. One of the most interesting findings with immigration policy is that sanctuary cities have increased economic standing for all citizens, not just recent immigrants. “Median household annual income is, on average, \$4,353 higher in sanctuary

counties compared to non-sanctuary counties. The poverty rate is 2.3 percent lower, on average, and unemployment is, on average, 1.1 percent lower in sanctuary counties compared to non-sanctuary counties” [2]. We Iowans should be welcoming families into Iowa that are ready and willing to work for a strong economy. This economy would benefit all Iowans and increase our labor force.

Our economy furthers benefits with immigrant labor. “They work at high rates and make up more than a third of the workforce in some industries. Their geographic mobility helps local economies respond to worker shortages, smoothing out bumps that could otherwise weaken the economy” [3]. During any time of national crisis, including COVID-19, immigrants work to address our local economies, usually the first to be hit. It would be in any Iowans best interest to have a robust labor force to prevent shortages during difficult economic periods. Furthermore “children born to immigrant families are upwardly mobile, promising future benefits not only to their families but to the U.S. economy overall.” [3]. Our economy is struggling with the monetary toll of the pandemic. It is in our collective better interest to bolster the state-level economy. Setting up legal protections through sanctuary cities would be the most effective way to do so. In addition to providing longevity and security to families ready to work for a more prosperous Iowa.

Recommended Action

Iowa Legislature and Governor Kim Reynolds, It is our position that the governing bodies reverse Senate File 481. With this measure, the State of Iowa will join South Carolina, Illinois, California, Oregon, Washington, New York, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, Colorado Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New Mexico with laws that support Sanctuary Cities.

Senate Bill 481 was written with the intention to aid local and federal law enforcement investigations. However, we lose many benefits to the economy and harm our criminal justice system with the continued use of Senate Bill 481. Immigrants deserve to feel welcomed to Iowa, where they can work hard to pursue our values right alongside Iowans that are raised here. Senate File 481 needs to be reversed.

In addition to Senate File 481, It is SIYAC’s position to support legislation that aids immigrants during this uncertain time of COVID-19. This could be economic, social or political measures. As we rebuild to a stronger Iowa, we need the support of immigrant families.

Regards,

Human Rights Committee
State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council

Sources

- [1] PBS NewsHour. "California cities show stark differences on immigration" Youtube, 10 Apr. 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRGt-CFut-E>.
- [2] Wong, Tom K. "The Effects of Sanctuary Policies on Crime and the Economy." *Center for American Progress*, www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/reports/2017/01/26/297366/the-effects-of-sanctuary-policies-on-crime-and-the-economy/.
- [3] Sherman, Arlo, Danilo Trisi, Chad Stone, Shelby Gonzales, Sharon Parrott. "Immigrants Contribute Greatly to U.S. Economy, Despite Administration's 'Public Charge' Rule Rationale." *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 15 Aug. 2019, www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/immigrants-contribute-greatly-to-us-economy-despite-administrations.
- [4] Tsu, Naomi. "What Is a Sanctuary City Anyway?" Teaching Tolerance, <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts/what-is-a-sanctuary-city-anyway>.